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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RELEASE: CITY LEADERS, LGBT ACTIVISTS COMMEMORATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST LGBTQ PROTEST

Openly gay Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell to lead program of celebration and demonstration at The Black Cat Tavern

SILVER LAKE - Gay activists will mark the 50th anniversary of the demonstration at The Black Cat, the site of the first LGBTQ civil rights protest in the United States, with a re-enactment, celebration, march and a modern-day political rally, Los Angeles City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell announced today.

The event will take place on **Saturday, February 11, 8 p.m., at The Black Cat, 3909 Sunset Boulevard, in Silver Lake.** [The event has a Facebook page.](#) and will utilize the hashtag #BlackCat67 to archive the festivities on social media.

"Los Angeles and the 13th Council District have been ground zero for some of the most important events in LGBT history, especially the watershed Black Cat protests that took place right here in Silver Lake 50 years ago," said Councilmember O'Farrell, who is sponsoring the commemoration. "It wasn't that long ago that people like me were targeted by the police for being true to ourselves. Lives were ruined, and a whole class of people were marginalized. We have come a long way since 1967, but new threats loom on the horizon from the Trump Administration, threatening our civil rights and those of other traditionally persecuted communities."

The celebration is exactly 50 years to the date of the original demonstration, and will include speeches from gay activists and other Angelenos. The event will acknowledge the past, present and the unknown future of LA's LGBTQ community.

"As a resident of Silver Lake, I am proud of the legacy of those brave souls fighting for our rights in 1967," said Daniel Henning, one of the organizers of the event. "Most people don't know that the first LGBT demonstration in the U.S. was here - in Silver Lake. It's an important story to tell the next generation so they can make sure the rights we fought for so strongly continue into the future."

The event will showcase performances by Celebration Theatre and Gay Theatre Activist/Icon Michael Kearns, and will include a dance party in the parking lot.

"We feel it is our role being at the center of the physical location, to keep this story alive," said Lindsay Kennedy, one of the owners of modern-day Black Cat restaurant. "It is our obligation to the community to be caretakers of that history. To us, gay rights are human rights."

According to historians and published reports, shortly after midnight on January 1, 1967, bar patrons of The Black Cat Tavern rang in the new year with a kiss. Also in attendance that evening were undercover officers with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), who ended the night with violence and 14 arrests, including six who were charged with lewd conduct because of that kissing.

The raid sparked the burgeoning Gay Rights movement in the country: several weeks later, on February 11, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in Silver Lake and demanded the LAPD change its policy towards gay people.

“Fifty years have passed since that first PRIDE demonstration on February 11, 1967,” said Alexei Romanoff, one of the organizers of the 1967 protest. “We, the American LGBTQ community, have made tremendous progress since then, but our struggle for full acceptance continues. Nothing is more appropriate for this special occasion than to revisit the site, learn what happened and why, and join in rededicating ourselves to finish the work we began so many years ago.”

Unfortunately, this type of behavior from law enforcement was not uncommon in gay enclaves in 1960s Gay America. While the Black Cat protest did not change how law enforcement treated the community, it did however serve as a launching pad for the LGBTQ civil rights movement in the United States. The event also sparked the rise of The Advocate, one of the first LGBT-publications in the country.

In 2013, Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell joined some of the original demonstrators to dedicate The Black Cat as an historic landmark and unveiled a plaque outside of the building to recognize the landmark achievement, which helped lead to the dawn of the gay civil rights movement.

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